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WILD

Wild Get the Job Done in Game 4 With Backs Against the Wall



By [Heather Rule](#) - April 20, 2017

Traditionally, the Minnesota Wild have been known to turn it up a notch when their backs are against the wall. The evidence can be found in a few of their runs to make the postseason the past few years, or even going back to the 2003 playoffs when they came back to win two series down three games to one.

So in some ways, it might not be such a huge surprise that the Wild came back to win Game 4 in St. Louis Wednesday night after digging themselves an 0-3 hole in the best-of-seven series. The Wild got some superb play from Devan Dubnyk in a 2-0 shutout of the Blues, ensuring a Game 5 would be played in St. Paul this weekend.

A good start and scoring the first goal are both pretty important factors in this series.

The first period was the kind of effort many had hoped to see from the drop of the puck in Game 3 Sunday. The Wild came out with a physical game, generating chances and shots on goal right away. The Blues got called for icing over and over in the first few minutes, preventing much flow early on. The home team went about 10 minutes without a shot directed at Dubnyk.

Meanwhile, the Wild led shots on goal 11-4 through the first period. Shots on goal for the game were dead even at 28-28, and the Wild held a slight faceoff-win percentage edge at 51 percent. Of course, it's been much-discussed this series how little these stats really mean when a team doesn't score many goals and racks up a trio of losses.

Wednesday's game started to look a lot like the first game of the series, when the Wild put more than 50 shots on net and couldn't get anything by netminder Jake Allen until the final minute of regulation. It might have been more reassuring to see this pattern repeat if the Wild had won Game 1, which remains the biggest missed opportunity of the series for the Wild.

A good start and scoring the first goal are both pretty important factors in this series. This time, the Wild got on the board for the 1-0 lead. Charlie Coyle, perhaps still riding some due karma from the first game, scored with 3:10 left in the first period. It was a misplay from Allen as he went for a skate behind the net and couldn't get back into position in time as Coyle got the puck along the boards and didn't hesitate in firing it toward the goal.

The Wild made it 2-0 late in the second when Martin Hanzal came up the middle with speed and a snipe-shot that beat Allen and may have even surprised him. A 3-on-2 developed as Hanzal skated through the neutral zone before shooting the puck past Allen's stick side.

It was all the offense the Wild needed as Dubnyk and the defense did their jobs in the third to keep the Blues from scoring.

Break down a series like this, and it can become very simple. The team that scores first in this series has gone on to win the game. Getting that first goal seems to set the tone for the style of play each team will fall into either up 1-0 or trailing.

Momentum is no doubt an important factor as well. The "one game at a time" phrase is cliché for a reason, but it also rings extremely true in the postseason during a best-of-seven series. A 3-1 series

lead still tilts the ice in the favor of St. Louis, but now the Wild potentially get two of their next three at home if they keep extending the series. It's all in how you look at it, if you'd like to be a glass-half-full observer.

If the Wild can manage to extend the series again by winning Game 5, then there's a good chance the pressure goes back to the Blues to close out the series in Game 6. No matter what, though, with the 0-3 hole the Wild created for themselves, they'll still be playing with those backs against the wall the rest of the way. For them, maybe that's a good thing.

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